THE ORTHODOX WORD

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Letters

AN APPEAL

Beloved brethren
and sisters in Christ,

In October of 1979, the small parish of Sts. Peter and Paul in Moundsville, West Virginia, dismayed by the increasing modernism within the American Metropolia (the "O.C.A."), voted to dissociate itself from what it considered to be an uncanonical Church and was subsequently received into the bosom of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. Litigation over control of the parish property, including the church building and rectory, became so involved and costly, however, that it would be best to begin afresh with the purchase of a new piece of property and the construction of a new church.

With the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan Philaret, we have renamed the parish in honor of St. Xenia the Blessed of St. Petersburg, and hope, with God's help and hard work, to erect the first parish church in the world dedicated to the blessed one.

We are a small group, but are accustomed to hard work. We have already managed to purchase a plot of land suitable for construction, adjacent to which is another plot of land which, should we be able to afford it, could serve as a cemetery. But our own means are limited, and if we are to construct a church truly fit for the worship of Almighty God and as a memorial to our beloved Blessed Xenia, we must appeal to all pious Orthodox Christians to share in this truly godly task. We have no doubt that those who take up this burden with us will be vouchsafed a reward in Heaven.

Accordingly, we appeal to those who read this to support our humble endeavors by sending donations to:

St. Xenia's Orthodox Church
Building Fund
P.O. Box 825
Moundsville, W.V. 26041

May God send down His rich blessings upon all who struggle to maintain the Orthodox Faith pure and unadulterated in our times, and may St. Xenia the Blessed protect and preserve all who venerate her holy memory and assist us in constructing a church which will be a fit memorial to her.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
The Parishioners of
St. Xenia's Orthodox Church

"SOUL AFTER DEATH"

A fellow parishioner gave me an issue of *The Orthodox Word.* Most interesting was the article about the soul after death. I happen to have read *Life after Death* and *Life after Life.* As you write in your article, those experiences are at a very low level. If life after death is only what those people report, then I do not even want to

(Continued on inside back cover)

From this day, from this hour,
from this minute, let us strive
to love God above all,
and fulfill His holy will.

THE ORTHODOX WORD

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Abbot Damascene of Valaam

Builder of Orthodox Sanctity

1881-1981

A THOUSAND YEARS OF VALAAM

In the northern part of Russia a thousand years ago, on an island in the huge lake of Ladoga, was founded the monastery of Valaam. And ever since, with relatively short intervals, holy monks have labored there for Christ. Their influence was immense in the building of Holy Russia, when daily life was lived according to the ascetic principles of the Christian world-view.

Now that we are celebrating a thousand years of Valaam's monasticism, the hundred years since the death of one of its major builders, Abbot Damascene, seems such a small time. He was a spiritual giant with a loving heart, and he was the primary force which shaped the last flowering of Valaam sanctity, something that lasted up to the middle of this century.

Father Damascene was of simple peasant stock. He came at a young age to Valaam and at once became the disciple of Elder Euthemius, a direct link with Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky. He brought up his apprentice in the strict desert-loving tradition. Valaam always had the three types of monasticism, and Damascene "graduated" from all of them, spending fourteen years as a recluse on a forest island, in addition to knowing the life of the sketes and the coenobitic monastery. Another offspring of the Paisian tradition, Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov,

insisted on placing him as abbot in Valaam, and he was not mistaken; for this timid man became the general of thousands of Christ's warriors, establishing numerous sketes around the fortress of the main monastery as spiritual watchtowers on the surrounding islands.

The magnitude of his personality and influence came from his total openness, simplicity, humbleness, and love, which worked miracles and made him a clairvoyant elder in the midst of a number of holy elders. He knew how to forgive, conquering with a burning love the hearts of all who came within the sphere of his influence.

His talks were not eloquent or abstract. His advice was always brief, practical, to the point, and highly effective, for he spoke without calculation, but from heart to heart. When he met a responsive soul, in his able hands that soul would reach the heights of spiritual perfection through the narrow path of absolute humility and self-renunciation. This made him not only a builder in the outward sense (indeed, no one erected more buildings or established more sketes than he in the whole history of Valaam), but even more he was a *builder of sanctity* on his island lavra, whose influence spread far and wide, making him one of the greatest spiritual leaders of the Orthodox Church in recent times.

But the spirit of Valaam's monasticism still calls men of good will and inspiration to the resolve to wage war within oneself against the spirit of this world, against sensuality and self-pity. And the spirit of Abba Damascene can still be a builder of the life of sanctity so needed by Orthodox Christians today.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Having arrived in Valaam as a novice, Father Damascene gave himself entirely over to monastic renunciation. With a quick grasp, attention, and intelligence he fulfilled all his obediences. At first he was assigned to the stables, then baking braed, and when he would have a free moment he would pray with many prostrations. When he would get exhausted he would fall right there on the floor in order to catch a moment of sleep, and then again he would jump up and complete his obedience with prayer. In about two years he was placed in charge of all the monastery workers. The exemplary zeal that this young novice showed

attracted the Abbot's attention. He was therefore placed in charge of guarding the monastery. He was given a boat, a boatman, and a horse in order to do the surveillance. This gave him an opportunity to be close to nature, which is so important for monastic development, and at the same time it gave him ample opportunity to see the potential of Valaam's natural setting for monastic striving.

At the very beginning of his stay in Valaam, Fr. Damascene met a simple monk who told him: "Stay with us here, brother. We have three types of monastic life: at first one must labor in the monastery, then in the skete, and only then in the desert. Stay with us, brother. Here is my prayer rope for you." With these words the Elder told him how to pray the Jesus Prayer and directed him to Fr. Euthemius, saying, "This is a truly simple monk." The humbleness of Euthemius truly amazed Damascene and he didn't know what to say to the elder, but soon he became totally devoted to this expert of human hearts, who was not lazy in bringing forth a great ascetic in his young disciple.

Damascene's cell was above the stables outside the main body of the monastic dormatories. Every midnight Euthemius would come with a long pole and knock at the window to wake his disciple for Nocturn prayers, and would persistently continue knocking until the other would return a knock on his window pane. Every night, without lighting a light in his cell, the young ascetic would fulfill his prayer rule even before the beginning of the church services. With the first bell which gathered the brothers to common prayer he would hasten to church, which at times would take great effort, since overnight whole mountains of snow would sometimes fall and cover the path, and at times one would have to crawl to the church for Nocturns in snow up to the waist.

In his cell there was total nonacquisitiveness: one icon, one book, a prayer rope, a table, two stools (which were of his own making) and two boards, which during the night served as a bench on which a mat and pillow were placed for his bedding. These were all the possessions of the humble brother. He had one blanket for a covering. His winter overcoat was also of a very poor quality. He never ate or drank anything without a blessing, although his obedience was in the bread baking area.

On Christmas, 1823, he was made a ryassaphor monk. He then began to acquire the experience of coenobitic monastic life. After two

years he was tonsured a monk. Soon after that his elder, Fr. Euthemius, secluded himself in the desert and Fr. Damascene received a blessing to go and live in a skete, thus acquiring the second type of monastic experience. He went to the Skete of All Saints, which was the largest skete founded by Abbot Nazarius, where the perpetual reading of the psalter was conducted day and night. True to his strict way of life, here too Damascene put all his strength into taking care of the skete brotherhood, which consisted primarily in gray-haired elders.

In two years he left for the desert. Where the Konevits Skete of the Mother of God is now located, there was at that time an impenetrable desert forest within a six mile walking distance (it was three miles if one went by boat). His ascetic life was known only to God. In the monastery they knew that his food was scarce. He ate mostly dry bread and would cook food on rare occasions, eating sometimes already spoiled food. On feastdays he would come to the Skete of All Saints for the Liturgy, and after the service, having taken the antidoron, he hastened to depart, avoiding meetings and conversations, to his beloved desert, since the occasional meetings and conversations would threaten his inward spiritual peace. Later he would say that if at times during the feast days in the monastery he would allow himself to talk to someone, then coming back to the desert it would take sometimes a week or more before he would attain again the blissful state in which he was before. For this reason the skete cook would prepare his food or bread and place it at the garden gate. Damascene, returning to his desert from the services, would then take his portion of food, and hastening into his cell would sit down on his bed, and glorifying God, would eat his bread with water, rejoicing over his peaceful festive dinner. Sometimes the humble ascetic would abandon even this portion of food, preferring spiritual joy in its place. While in the desert he never changed his clothes or underwear and wore his clothing until his shirt literally fell off his back.

He lived in a small house divided into four tiny rooms. In the first one, which was larger than the others, he did his carpentry work. He would carve out wooden spoons. Sometimes he would spend whole nights through doing this work. In the second room he would scrupulously copy out books at a special table made and designed by himself for that purpose. In the third room, which was so small that a human being could

hardly fit in it, he would conduct his desert-dwelling prayer rule and prostrations. Here it is fitting to note that his prayer rule was not easy: Matins, the Hours with Inter-hours, kathismata, and also the "Twelve Psalms" which were sung by the ancient desert fathers. In this cell was his icon of the Dormition of the Mother of God, a prayer rope, mantia, and a small stool on which for many hours on end he would sit and practice mental prayer. Finally, in the fourth room there was a coffin made out of simple boards by his own labor, where this strict desert dweller would lay his much-labored body for a short rest. This coffin served as his bed and the lid of the coffin as his blanket. There was no heater in the house. There were in the house iron chains which he inherited from the previous inhabitant, Schema-monk Porphyry. These chains Fr. Damascene wore while he dwelt in the desert for ever greater self-mortification and for greater mortification of the sinful flesh, as he would later recall: "At times I would start to make prostrations, and the iron would get so hot that it would burn the flesh, but thereby the soul would be peaceful and joyful. Ah, if only one could spend one's whole life like that!"

Fr. Damascene during his desert dwelling showed no pity on himself and strove in every way possible to humble his flesh. Prayer and labor, labor and prayer, almost constantly without stop, day and night – so Fr. Damascene spent his entire life in the desert.

Much did he suffer while in the desert from demonic temptations, which would assail him visibly or invisibly. Many times during the long autumn nights the enemy of our salvation would appear to him as an old man coming out of the lake with long disheveled hair. At times the enemy would attack him invisibly through an excessive dose of despondency and despair. But the Lord did not abandon his faithful slave, for with prayer on his lips and the sign of the cross as with a flaming sword, the virtuous desert dweller rebuffed the enemy's temptations. Once when he was in such a state, Abbot Barlaam visited him, and he heard from Damascene such words: "I'm contemplating running away." The Abbot told him to endure like St. Anthony the Great: "...endure the enemy's temptations, but don't leave the desert. Stay there and count the boards in the ceiling." And he became conqueror of the enemy's temptations. Having acquired the necessary experience in the desert, he became the main force in the foundation of the chief sketes of Valaam.

HIS ACHIEVEMENTS

Once Fr. Damascene became the Abbot he already had a good sober picture of what is needed and what ought to be the emphasis for the formation of true soldiers of Christ. His main concern, of course, was the fortification of the ancient Valaam coenobium with its many inter-dependent "households" or workshops, which provided independence and stability for this virtual world of monasticism. Having achieved this, he turned next to the building of isolated sketes all over the islands, and provided them with strict eremitic rules. In the skete of St. John the Baptist, for example, the rule was so strict that the monks never tasted non-fast foods.

This whole ascetic way of life was generally in a total harmony with the unspoiled temper of the simple Russian Orthodox Christian, the tone being that of "seeking the heavenly homeland" (in the words of St. Herman of Alaska). It was also highly conducive to the contemplative aspect of Orthodox monastic aspirations, to which Valaam was geared.

Fr. Damascene's labors soon gave their fruits: humility of wisdom began to exude from various monks, and sanctity was quite apparent in a number of the desert dwellers. This was the crown of Fr. Damascene's labors, amidst which he aged, and then, on December 23, 1881, passed on to the Lord. His last days were marked by his extraordinary childlike simplicity, inward peace, and total guilelessness, occasionally clearly revealing his gift of foresight. When he died, Valaam monastery was at its height in all respects. Only a few monasteries in the world could rival it.

May our Lord, through the prayers of Elder Damascene, protect also this land of America, whose heavenly patron is another Valaam monk, Saint Herman of Alaska. It was Abbot Damascene who first laid the beginning for St. Herman's glorification, for it was he who first collected and published the Life of St. Herman and his iconographic representation in 1864. He also set the tone for his canonization, which due to the Revolution was so long postponed. Abbot Damascene strengthened his monks also as defenders of Orthodoxy, and this was clearly revealed during the controversy over the question of the "new church calendar." It is hoped that the monks of America today will not seek only the exter-

nals of Orthodox monasticism, but will fortify themselves in the steps and spirit of Abbot Damascene by placing the monastic struggle in its primary position and have the Valaam tradition as its guiding light. For truly, without Abbot Damascene's spirit monasticism today can easily turn into a self-satisfying phenomenon that could well serve the spirit of the antichrist. May the spirit of Abbot Damascene protect the monastic shoots of America from this calamity.

Our holy Father Damascene, pray to God for us!

* * *

In a dream after his death, Abbot Damascene gave the following testament on the meaning of monastic life to his grieving spiritual daughter, Abbess Taisia of Leushy:

He asked me: "Do you know what is the meaning of the rending in two of the veil of the Temple in Jerusalem at the time of the Saviour's death on the Cross?" I replied, as I had studied in the Sacred Scripture, that this signified the division between the Old and New Testaments. "That is good," he replied, "that is correct according to the books; but think yourself: doesn't this refer somehow to our monastic life?"

I began to think; and being uncertain myself of the sxactness and rightness of my opinion, I replied: "I think that this signifies how the human soul is torn as it strives towards God and towards pleasing God; it is rent in two, becoming spiritual but not ceasing to belong to the fleshly man that dwells in it; it is torn, cutting off and tearing away from itself the will of the outward man which is sweet, but inclined to sin; its poor heart is torn, tearing itself in half, into pieces: some of them, as unfit but nonetheless kin to it, it tears and throws into the world, but the others it carries like pure incense to its Christ. Oh, how difficult it sometimes is for the poor heart; how it is tormented and suffers, literally being torn in half!"

I never heard not expected to hear anything like that when awake; but now I said this in my dream with such fervor that I was all covered with tears. Abbot Damascene replied to me: "Yes, the Lord has not deprived you of His grace. Is it for you to grow fainthearted and despondent in sorrows? Take courage, and may your heart be strengthened with hope in the Lord." With these words he stood up and again blessed me. I awoke all in tears, but in tears no longer of sorrow but of unutterable joy, which for a long time strengthened my weak powers.

Archimandrite TAVRION
Last Elder of Glinsk Hermitage

From the midst of Soviet reality we may see a glimpse of Holy Russia in pastors like Father Tavrion. The image of him and his convent given in this first-hand account is rough, severe, sometimes "incorrect" by the polished standards of the comfortable Orthodoxy of the West. But how close to God it is, and what a reproach to us! It is clear that the life of God's Church in Russia goes on despite the betrayal, willing and unwilling, of the hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate. May this picture of true Church life be an inspiration to us in our own small struggles!

A BLESSING FROM METROPOLITAN PHILARET

September 9/22, 1980

Dear Father Herman,

I am sending you material for printing which I have received from a novice of Lesna Convent, Maria Erastova. It is about the last elder of Glinsk Hermitage, Archimandrite Tavrion.

According to the information which I have, this wise and pious elder belonged at first to the Catacomb Church; but seeing how the believing people were scattered like sheep without a shepherd, he joined the official church, but in his activity he stood absolutely apart from it, giving all his strength to the spiritual guidance of believing souls. The Erastov family knew him well and made use of his spiritual guidance.

May God help you. Peace be to you and the brethren.

With love,
Metropolitan Philaret

HOLY TRANSFIGURATION HERMITAGE

THE FIRST TIME I went to the little Hermitage was in May, 1972. A friend of mine had told me that near Riga there was a women's convent, and that she had a friend there, a nun who was the choir director. She invited me to go there for a rest. I agreed.

The Holy Transfiguration Hermitage is actually some distance from Riga. At first we took the train to the little town of Elgava, and then the bus to a small station called "Valgunda School." We got out on an empty road. If I had been alone, of course, I would have been lost, but my friend confidently turned to the left. We walked for about ten minutes into an ever thickening forest. It became darker and darker, and the forest ever thicker, and already the thought occurred to me: "We are lost." And suddenly before us we saw – the holy gates of the Hermitage, decorated and with a small dome on top. We crossed ourselves and entered the convent.

In the Hermitage there are two churches: one large stone church, and another smaller one where services are held in the winter. Despite the fact that it was spring, it was still cold, and they were still serving in the winter church. On the door there was hanging a neatly written sign: Holy Transfiguration Hermitage, Divine Services: 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Spiritual father of the convent: Archimandríte Tavrion.

We stood through the service, and then we were conducted into the refectory. The Elder had the following custom: all pilgrims, while they remained in the monastery, received communion every day. Therefore, the food was strictly lenten: nothing but soup, kasha and tea. (It is true that this was given three times a day). The monastics, on the other hand, did not receive communion so frequently, and therefore they ate separately. We were placed in a small room in a two storey stone house. In general there were many buildings in the Hermitage, the greater part of them built by Father Tavrion.

I remained in the monastery for several days and was intending to leave. According to the existing custom, all about to leave would come to Father Tavrion to receive his blessing for the journey. My companion and I also came. The Elder recevied people for a short time: he would say a few words, give a blessing, and let one go. When our turn came, he asked me kindly, "Well, what do you say?" I said, "Batiush-

ka, I have seven children." He was radiant. "Seven children! What a wonderful thing! Your husband must love you very much." And he smiled such a joyful smile.

I said, "No, Batiushka, my husband has left me." "He's left you! Well, that's nothing. The children are probably good." And he became yet more joyful. I sighed: "No, Batiushka. My children are disobedient." And the Elder said to me, even more joyfully: "Well, that's all right. Everything will be well with you. Seven children – how wonderful!"

I became encouraged. "Is it true, Batiushka, that everything will be all right?" He smiled and said, "Well, maybe it won't be." And somehow at these words I became even more joyful than when he had said that everything would be well with me. Then suddenly he looked at me (usually he spoke with people without looking at them) and said, "Do you wish to be saved? I see that you wish to be saved. Love children." And he repeated again, "Do you wish to be saved? Love children. In life not everything seems to be just. That is because everyone has become used to looking at things from the point of view of this life, and people forget that this is only a small minute – no, just a fraction of a second, an instant in comparison with that eternal life."

I remembered these words of his when at my last meeting with him (when we were about to go abroad), he told me, "Do not think that God is cruel or wishes to torture us. God is a loving father; he does everything for our salvation. Do not forget that this temporal life is so small in comparison with eternal life."

And so these first words crossed with his last instruction.

Then I remembered the money which I had prepared for him. It was five rubles which I had left over from my expenses. I thought for a long time over what to do with it: to buy the children some kind of treats, or to give it to the Elder. During our conversation I held it in my hand and crumpled it, and so it ended up in the shape of a little accordion. Remembering the money, I handed it to the Elder. "Here, Batiushka, this is to commemorate my family at the Liturgy." The Elder, without looking, took it and ordered me to come the next day before my departure.

The next morning, in hopes of a spiritual talk, I went to the Elder. He said nothing to me, but only blessed me and handed me a sealed envelope with the words, "This is for the children." I thought

ARCHIMANDRITE, TAVRION

that it was probably a letter. When I entered my room and opened the envelope, crisp new ten-ruble notes fell out, and on top of them was my poor little folded five-ruble note. I burst into tears and ran to the Elder. "Batiushka, I do not wish to take money from you."

He said nothing; he only began to outline on my forehead the sign of the cross, which, as I later found out, he always did when he wished to make a person understand. However, I stuck to my own opinion stubbornly and even got on my knees. Finally I said decisively, "Batiushka, I will not take any money from you all the same. If you wish, you can give me my five rubles back, and I will buy the children some treats with it." He saw that I was stubborn and he agreed. When saying farewell I asked him, confused, "Batiushka, and what about the commemoration?" He only shrugged his shoulders and said, "Even without your five ruble bill we will pray for you." This was my first trip to the Elder.

GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH THE ELDER

In the autumn our family situation grew better, and during the vacation period I went to the Hermitage with my husband and our four oldest children, 8 to 18 years old. Even then we had all begun to feel the effectiveness of the prayers of Father Tavrion for us. When we arrived it was already evening, but we did make it in time for services. In the morning we all received communion, and when we came up to the cross, people began to push the children (there were many people – not less than two or three hundred in the small wooden church). The children also pushed and made noise, so that I was afraid that they would overturn the analogion and the candlestand and would knock Batiushka himself off his feet. With a heavy feeling of shame, and without looking at the Elder, I kissed the cross, and when I was already departing I heard the kind words, "Grace is trying to enter us, and we oppose it." I became a little encouraged at this; after all, grace does not leave us.

This time we remained a short time, two days altogether. Before our departure we went to the Elder. He received us very kindly, brought us into his second reception room where he usually received the bishop. The room was furnished much better than the first reception room; it was even luxurious by Soviet standards. He placed us on the sofa, and himself went out and returned in a second with a cup of monastery kvas in his hands. (This monastery kvas was very delicious, made of bread,

honey and apples.) The Elder always treated his guests with kvas when he wished to be especially kind. Then he settled himself and began to talk to us:

"In an old house, in a large apartment, there lives a large family." And in a few words he described our whole situation in Moscow, although he had never been to see us and afterwards he never came. Then he said, "Well, you draw – keep drawing. You sing – keep singing. This will all be useful for you in life. And perhaps you will have one so skilled at this that he will make the family famous, but another one will be simply a good family man."

I, of course, did not hesitate to correct the Elder: "Batiushka, they do not sing, but they play musical instruments." He seemed not to notice my words. I continued to regard myself as more intelligent than the Elder, but he still turned out to be right: when we came abroad none of my children played any more on instruments, but the fact that they sang and now continue to sing in the choir has helped us a great deal in our life.

The Elder continued: "We also had a large family – ten children, and I was the youngest. It happened that my brothers were reciting their lessons aloud and I was lying on the stove listening to it all. Mama said, 'See, you are all studying all the time, but Tikhon knows everything without all that.' They tested me, and it was true, I knew everything: Russian history, the history of the ancient world, and everything they were studying. And later when I went to school, in my history clases I would crawl under the desk and would draw. I loved very much to draw. Once the teacher noticed me and dragged me out by my ear. 'What are you doing?' I said, 'I already know the whole lesson.' 'How can this be?' He began to test me, and it was true: I knew everything, and even knew the lessons ahead. Then he allowed me to draw during his classes.

"We had a large family, and we all worked hard; my mother especially was a hard worker. No one knew when she got up. In the morning she would make some pancakes and give them to the children, and we would run to school holding the hot pancakes to our breasts, and we would eat them on the way. We would work the whole day and in the evening after supper we would sit down to sing. We were all very musical, and one brother even played the violin. And so he would play and we would sing religious songs. All the neighbors envied my mother and said, 'You are fortunate. No one has a family like you have.' And then,

when the civil war came, my father – just because he wished all the children to become officers, and all of them except me did so – was seized and put into prison. There the poor old man died. Some of the children were killed, and some were placed in prison. I was in a monastery and then in a concentration camp, and Mama died in someone else's house."

Then the Elder suddenly asked, "Do you like Dostoevsky? Have you read *The Brothers Karamazov*? Remember how Elder Zosima is described there? Well, that is how we were."

In general the Elder loved Dostoevsky very much. Especially often would he repeat, "Love a man even in his fall." Once he told us: "In Dostoevsky it is written that if one in his childhood has received just one pious, good impression, then no matter how dark and filthy his life might be in the future, this impression will not allow him to perish utterly. And here is an example for you: I remember how, when I was quite small, my god-mother, a pious elderly lady, put a new little belt on me and brought me to church. And so I was sitting in her arms, and all around me were icons, the little flames from the lamps, and candles. And it was so beautiful, so magnificent, and I loved it so much, that when I was seven years old I ran away to a monastery for the first time. But they sent me back because my father wished that all his children should be officers. And then at the age of ten I finally went for good to a monastery, and my mother said, 'One must give the tenth part to God.'"

PILGRIMS AT THE HERMITAGE

From that time we began to go frequently to the Hermitage. Every vacation period, three or four times during the year, we would go to the Elder. One should keep in mind that the conditions in the monastery were most severe. We were placed in large rooms where the pilgrims slept on the floor, forty people to a room. There were no chairs in church and the services were long. The Liturgy began at 7:00, but for those who were to receive communion, they read the rule at 4:30 and there was confession. The Elder required that even the children should come this early. Therefore, when the children became tired I would place on the floor a fur coat and they would sit on it and often would fall asleep.

The food was of the poorest kind, and we did not add to it anything of our own. Therefore, it was not surprising that after each five or

six day trip I would bring the children to Moscow half dead, and it would take a whole month after that for us to return to normal. However, all these inconveniences could not restrain our desire to go and see the Elder.

Every journey to him was a new spiritual stage in our life. I remember that once I went in the autumn, taking with me only two children – my oldest boy and my small girl three years old. After the long difficult journey we immediately went to the service. Despite the fact that it was already November and fiercely cold, they were still serving in the summer church. The stone floor was freezing, and I saw a fever developing in my shivering baby right before my eyes. Here I involuntarily murmured, "Oh, Lord, what is this? At least they could give us a glass of hot water, or put us in a little room." But the Elder came out to the ambo and in his sermon began to relate how the Lord gave to the Apostle Paul an "angel of satan, a thorn in the flesh," and how Paul asked the Lord to deliver him, but the Lord answered him, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." And then the Apostle Paul cried out, "If it is made perfect in weakness, O Lord, then give to me more of these weaknesses so that Thy power might be more active in me." With these words I became calm and ceased to be agitated because of these temporary physical inconveniences.

CHURCH SERVICES IN THE HERMITAGE

The Elder gave great significance to the outward splendor of the temple, the singing and the services. The whole year long fresh flowers adorned the church and the altar. I remember two large vases with white lilies which stood around the icon of the Mother of God surrounded by cherubim. And these white lilies, joining together with the white wings of the angels, left an indelible impression.

The Elder was an Archimandrite with three crosses and he had the right to serve the Liturgy with the royal doors open. This right he made use of every day. During the Liturgy Father Tavrion would change his vestments three times: he would begin serving in a vestment of a color appropriate to the day (yellow, blue, green, etc.); the Eucharist itself he would celebrate always in a red vestment; and he gave communion in a white vestment as on Pascha. He did all this to cause the various people who stood before him, and who understood almost nothing, to be reverent and to love the splendor of the church services.

At Christmas the church was adorned in an especially triumphant manner: on both sides of the altar two small fir trees were placed, adorned with silver threads; the large icon in back of the altar-table was changed to one of the same size of the Nativity of Christ. This icon had been painted by the Elder. (He painted very well and had even studied at the Academy); it is interesting that the Mother of God and Joseph in this icon were depicted in black monastic garments. On the left side behind the choir there was placed a small icon of the Nativity, and on both sides of it were cardboard figures of shepherds and magi, likewise painted by the Elder; behind the shepherds were some doughnuts baked from dough, covered with powdered sugar and with eyes made of raisins.

The services on the Nativity of Christ were held at 12:00 midnight, and after the Liturgy everyone went to break the fast. The food then was potatoes, herring, a piece of cheese, butter, and an egg; but this turned out to be a luxurious feast, especially because on the eve of the Nativity we did not eat or drink anything.

On the Dormition of the Theotokos there was always a procession with the Shroud of the Mother of God around the two churches. When the Shroud returned into the church it was held up high at the door, and everyone who entered passed underneath it. The same thing was done on Pascha. At Pentecost the rugs were taken our of the church and they made carpets of long grass; and in place of the strip of carpet in the center of the church there was a path of flowers from the entrance all the way to the royal doors. They also made for the Elder a pillow of grass, on which he knelt when he read the prayers (at Vespers of Pentecost).

The singing in the Hermitage was awful, despite all the attempts of Father Tavrion. The singing was on two sides: on the right choir were the nuns and on the left the secret nuns who had come following the Elder from Yaroslavl, together with all the pilgrims who wished to sing. The problem of the left choir was that there was no choir director, and the singers in this choir came and went; besides, many things are sung differently in various places. Therefore, the Elder himself often had to stand on the choir. On the right choir, there was a choir director, but the singers didn't listen to her much, and they sang dolefully – as the Elder expressed it, "as if dragging us into the grave."

Especially beautiful were the small peculiarities of the Elder's services, which made them unlike the services of any other priest. For

example: "Holy God" would be sung first by the right choir; then Fr. Tavrion would turn and face the people and exclaim: "Let the whole church sing!" – and he would lead the singing. The third "Holy God" would be by the choir. Always the same melody would be sung for "Holy God," taken from the Great Doxology of Feofanov.

The second time he said, "Let the whole church sing" was before the Creed. At the end of the Creed, now in red vestments, the Elder would turn to the Holy Doors, facing the people, and say: "And so, brother and sister Christians, we have come to the greatest moments of the world-saving service of the Divine Liturgy. The Church of God asks and entreats us to sing, praise, and thank God with one heart and one mouth. Let us do it." The singers from both sides would come down and kneel around the ambo; everyone present likewise got on their knees, and the whole church would sing "A mercy of peace" (always the Feofanov melody).

The third time Fr. Tavrion said "Let the whole church sing" was before the "Our Father." Later, when he was already sick, he gave communion sitting on a small stool, and then in his shining vestments he was like Abraham or one of the Patriarchs. One boy, when he caught sight of the Elder, cried out: "It's a king!" Truly, he was like a king in a sparkling white crown (mitre).

THE ELDER'S ATTITUDE TO THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES

Father Tavrion's attitude to the Soviet authorities was interesting. Without ever stepping out openly against them, he did not give in to them in anything. For example, on the sixtieth anniversary of the October revolution (1977), all churches were ordered to celebrate molebens for the health of the authorities. In all churches, even the most "leftist" ones, molebens were celebrated and sermons preached. The Elder marked this event with the briefest of sermons: "So you see how good it is: early, early in the morning, we glorify God at the Divine Liturgy. But what is being done now in the cities? They go about screaming 'Glory, glory!' But glory to whom?" Of course, he did not serve any molebens.

The question might arise: why did the government tolerate the existence of such a monastery? For several reasons.

(Continued on page 33)

What Does the Catacomb Church Think?

The information from Metropolitan Philaret that Archimandrite Tavrion was a catacomb priest who joined the official church (the Moscow Patriarchate) without betraying his catacomb convictions and genuine Orthodoxy – may at first sight seem surprising. How can such a thing be? Are not these two entirely separate and mutually exclusive church bodies? Is not the very joining of the official church a betrayal of the catacomb position? In theory it would seem so, but church life often cannot be fit into convenient rational and canonical categories. So it is in this case.

The members – and especially the clergy – of the Catacomb Church in Russia are the heroes of Russian Orthodoxy in the 20th century. But, especially at the present time, they are almost entirely deprived of direct influence on the Orthodox faithful of Russia. They are so secretive that they can scarcely be found at all, and for the most part they exist not in communities but in solitary cells. Few Orthodox Christians, even the most sincere, can endure their difficult struggle, particularly when it means – as it often does – being deprived of the Church's Holy Mysteries.

It is not entirely surprising, then, that sympathizers with and even direct adherents of the Catacomb Church should be found at times in the official church, trying to speak the truth and do the work of God in spite of the betrayal of the church leadership. One can speak of sev-

eral such people in the past decade: Boris Talantov, Fr. Dimitry Dudko, Elder Tavrion...

Have they succeeded? In one sense, no: the Moscow Patriarchate has not changed and undoubtedly will not change until Communism itself falls in Russia; there is no hope whatever that a return to normal Orthodox church life will occur through the official church. In this sense the heartfelt efforts of men like Boris Talantov and Fr. Dimitry Dudko are doomed to failure – as the Soviet authorities demonstrated convincingly last year by breaking (at least temporarily) the spirit of Fr. Dimitry.

But perhaps we are making a mistake in looking for "success" in this attempt. The ultimate "answer" to the problem of 20th century Russian Orthodoxy will not be given as long as atheism reigns in Russia and continues to exert its dictatorship over the Church; the hierarchs of the Catacomb Church in Russia, as of the Russian Church Outside of Russia, have always deferred the final judgment of the Russian church situation to the future free council that will meet only when Communism falls. Then, we believe, the Catacomb Church will have the final word and justify its struggle, and those who gave in to Sergianism will be judged – according to God's judgment, which is revealed in the Church's true councils, and not according to man's opinions.

The present church situation in Russia is not final, and even while expressing our own definite opinions on the betrayal of the Church by Sergianism, we are mistaken if we apply final judgments to this fluid situation.

And what does the Catacomb Church itself think? Not since its foundation in 1927 has the Catacomb Church had an authoritative voice – a free council of bishops speaking for the whole Church – to speak its mind. Individual Catacomb hierarchs and faithful have expressed sometimes varying opinions. But responsible voices within this Church have usually said one and the same thing: Sergianism is a betrayal, we must stay clear of it; but we need not deny the grace of the Mysteries of its clergy or expect all the faithful to be able to follow us. Such were the views of the wise early hierarchs of the Catacomb Church, set forth in most detail by Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan.

After the Second World War, by which time most of the early leaders of the Catacomb Church had died in prison or exile, there has been almost nothing that could be called a statement of the Catacomb Church on these questions. In 1977, however, with the publication of Lev Regel-

son's *Tragedy of the Russian Church* (YMCA Press, Paris), which is actually an apology for the early Catacomb position against Sergianism, a Catacomb document of 1962 was published, and it discusses precisely these questions.

Regelson believes that this document – which circulated in *samizdat* in Russia until he published it – was written by "one of the spiritually authoritative persons of the Catacomb Church" (p. 124). Its tone is very similar to the formal catacomb documents of 1971, "Russia and the Church Today" and "Church and Authority" (*The Orthodox Word*, 1972, no. 44). It was written as a letter of advice to sympathizers or perhaps members of the Catacomb Church who evidently could not find catacomb services and thought of attending services of the official church; the year of its composition was at the peak of the new persecutions of Khrushchev (1959-64), when the majority of still-open churches were closed. The letter is a firm statement of uncompromising principle, ranking with the early epistles of the Josephite hierarchs; but it is also filled with loving condescension for one's weaker brothers who are either unable to bear the difficulties of today's Catacomb Church, or are simply unable to find it, and it breathes hope for the eventual restoration of order to the suffering Russian Church when the atheist yoke will finally be overthrown.

The attitude of this epistle to the Russian church situation and the Moscow Patriarchate is, one can fairly say, identical to the attitude of the Russian Church Outside of Russia: in spiritual freedom (within the confines of his catacombs) and with an uncompromising position on church principle, the writer refrains from making final judgments or from separating himself entirely from the faithful (as opposed to the hierarchs) of the whole Russian Church; a profound church instinct tells him that, despite the tragedy of Sergianism, *all* the sincere Orthodox believers of Russia are still part of the same Church.

The epistle is translated here slightly abridged, but with none of its essential points omitted (*The Tragedy of the Russian Church*, pp. 187-193, 119-124.) The headings have been added by the translator.

A Catacomb Epistle of 1962

BY A MEMBER OF THE MUCH-SUFFERING
CATACOMB CHURCH OF RUSSIA

Dear Children,

You ask for a clarification of one and the same subject. It would be best of all to speak of this at a personal meeting, but unfortunately, I will have to write with the risk of not answering some of your perplexities.

THE SOVIET WAR AGAINST THE CHURCH

When they came to power, the Bolsheviks immediately declared war against the Church. This was, if you please, the only honest act in all their political activity, for any agreement between these two camps was unthinkable as a consequence of the contradictions which divide them (what communion is there of Christ with Belial?); and there can be no talk at all of toleration on the part of the Bolsheviks. But with the very declaration of war their honesty came to an end, for they set forth false motives. They immediately began to accuse the Church of counter-revolution. This was clearly an injustice, because from the time when the Bolsheviks became entrenched on the whole territory of former Russ- and the civil war came to an end, that is, from the time when it became clear to everyone to whom the governmental authority belonged, the Bolsheviks could not indicate a single *fact* which would come under this concept – the concept of political warfare, conspiracy, with the aim of annihilating the adversary. But they began to persecute Christians precisely under this false pretext. And when my turn came, at one of my interrogations, I declared to my interrogator: "Yes, I am a counter-revo-

lutionary; I do not deny it. Whenever you say 'yes', I say 'no'; whenever you say 'white', I say 'black'; whenever you praise, I sharply condemn. But you have no right to persecute me for this, since you have proclaimed freedom of religion. Consequently, my religious convictions, according to your own laws, are not a crime. And you cannot in the least accuse me of political warfare with you, of acts which have as their aim to call forth your annihilation." And despite the fact that he really could not bring forth an accusation of a single counter-revolutionary act against me, I was still "condemned" without any trial to ten years.

In the beginning the Bolsheviks were quite naive. It seemed to them that the chief power of the Church was to be found in its material might. Under the pretext of helping the hungry, they promoted the so-called "confiscation of Church valuables," from which not a single kopeck went to the hungry, and all the metal was used not for the buying of goods, but for the making of coins to support the fantastically devaluated Soviet ruble. But against all their expectations, the Church continued to stand, and her light even became a little purer and clearer. Being liberated from an obligation foreign to her – to defend and support the far from ideal (from her point of view) and therefore transitory governmental and social order, the Russian Church went over finally to the realization of her eternal aim: the grace-giving renewal and rebirth of human souls.

Then came a few years which everyone who experienced them in the enclosure of the Church can remember only with a feeling of great spiritual joy and fervent thanksgiving to God, Who vouchsafed them to experience what they did. There were confessors, there were martyrs, there were persecutions, annihilations, and mockeries. But this did not decrease the joy, for all this was endured not in the name of attaining any kind of earthly aims, but only in the name of Christ – only in His name. The Church, absolutely defenseless, felt itself to be both correct and unvanquishable. Clearly, life itself proved the rightness of the idea of St. John Chrysostom that, just as the enemies could do nothing with the Lord Jesus Christ and His Disciples as long as there was not found a traitor among them, so also no persecutions from outside are frightful to the Church, as long as there are no traitors among the shepherds. And, alas, such traitors were found.

The Soviet authorities managed to find certain hierarchs who did not consider it an abomination to step forth, one after the other, in the role of Judas Iscariot. At first it was the "Living Church," the "Reno-

vationists," then the "Gregorians," the "Lyubentsi," and many others. Their attempts to give over the rudder of the canonical administration of the Church into the hands of her sworn enemies, and thereby to distort or even completely paralyze her influence upon the spiritual life of the country, were fruitless until Metropolitan Sergius became the substitute of the Patriarchal Locum Tenens, after the arrest of a whole series of bishops who had occupied this position...

THE DECLARATION OF METROPOLITAN SERGIUS

And then, it seems it was in May, 1927, his Declaration was published. You have probably read it, therefore I don't need to set it forth in detail. One can only say that in it Metropolitan Sergius fulfilled not those promises which he had given to his brothers in faith, but those which had been demanded of him at the NKVD. A great disturbance arose. On the one hand, everyone felt that a believing Orthodox Christian could not agree with a single word of this Declaration; that it, if not formally, then in essence, was apostate in nature, declaring principles which are incompatible with the Christian consciousness and conscience. But on the other hand, it was precisely this open trampling upon Church justice that tore souls with a burning doubt. The thought arose, "It cannot be that Metropolitan Sergius decided on something which seems to us so unworthy, not only of a hierarch, but even of a simple Christian. Probably it is our excessive rigorism, our pride, that paints in such dark colors a sober and wise action of Metropolitan Sergius, who is respected by everyone and is a highly valued archpastor."

It was tormenting and difficult to decide. In the end, one part of the hierarchs and the ordinary clergy, with great pain of soul, decided that ... the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius was absolutely unacceptable for them, that it would bring frightful misfortunes to the Orthodox Church, that those joyful perspectives which Metropolitan Sergius promised in case his Declaration should be accepted – all the way to the opening of theological schools and permission for the Church to print its own publications – would never be realized. And since Metropolitan Sergius at the end of the Declaration offered to all those who were not in agreement to "depart" until they became convinced of the rightness and the successfulness of his course, they therefore "departed," cutting off communion with him and with everyone who submitted to him.

At the same time, there was no question among those who departed concerning whether those who followed Metropolitan Sergius had grace or not; this question they did not ask and did not decide. But the sharpness of the church battle led many among *the simple church people* to declarations that grace had been taken away from the followers of Metropolitan Sergius, that their sacraments were not sacraments, and that attending their churches defiled a Christian and made him an apostate. These views became especially widespread when, soon after the publication of the Declaration, the flock began quickly to be deprived of its shepherds and archpastors, who went into exile, prisons, and concentration camps. But the hierarchs who led the departure from Metropolitan Sergius, as well as the clergy close to them, taught only that in this year of great disturbance and division, it was fitting to attend only those churches where the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius was not read, and where he was not commemorated, *as a sign of the fact that they rejected the impious deeds of Metropolitan Sergius and his partisans.* These partisans of his turned out to be much more numerous than those who departed. Here, the reasons were both the great authority of Metropolitan Sergius and faint-heartedness – the fear of repressions, and the hope that one could escape them by going on the path to which Metropolitan Sergius called.

Soon the ruinous consequences of this "direction" were not slow in making themselves known. Into the concentration camps, after those who had "departed," there soon followed also all those who had hoped to be saved under Metropolitan Sergius' omophorion. Churches and monasteries were quickly closed, one after the other, and, ten years after the Declaration which had promised the Church "a quiet and undisturbed life," over the whole limitless expanse of the USSR there remained only *a few churches* in the large cities, and these were called "show churches." There remained still Metropolitan Sergius and the Synod unlawfully organized by him – about fifteen bishops ready to do anything, among whom was also the future Patriarch of All-Russia, Alexis Simansky.*

*** Actually, at its lowest state in 1940, the Moscow Patriarchate had only four bishops at freedom. The fifteen bishops who elected Sergius "Patriarch" in 1943 were quickly gathered from prisons and concentration camps at that time.**

THE OPENING OF THE CHURCHES

And so would everything have continued if the war had not occurred. In the areas occupied by the Germans there immediately began an elemental building of churches. The defiled but still whole churches were opened, cleaned, and consecrated, and wherever they had been destroyed there were organized houses of prayer. To these the believers brought the holy antimensia, icons, vessels, and all kinds of church furnishings which they had preserved in a holy way. Crowds of thousands again came to the churches, again they heard the word of God, again they received communion of the Bloodless Sacrifice. All this could not but be reflected in the areas which still remained under the power of Stalin. He understood that a continuation of the previous church policy could turn out to be extremely dangerous for him, and, determined not to be behind Hitler in piety, he commanded Metropolitan Sergius, who was obedient to him in everything, again to open those churches the closing of which he (Metropolitan Sergius) had justified not long before this, many times declaring to the whole world that there were no persecutions whatever in the USSR, and that churches were closed because the parishioners were petitioning for this, having decided that they did not need any church.

And so, the "new era" began, Churches were opened, fifteen bishops, with the permission of Stalin, made Metropolitan Sergius Patriarch, or Com-patriarch, as the Germans justly called him in their newspapers. The newly-baked Patriarch began feverishly to increase the number of his bishops, bringing them up in the short period of his Patriarcate to fifty and more souls, of course all thinking exactly like him. Even the boldest dreams were realized: several seminaries and two Academies were opened, and permission was given for the publication of the Journal of the Patriarchate. However, the reason for all this "blossoming" was, clearly, not the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, but something which for its existence owed nothing whatever to Metropolitan Sergius: the invasion of Hitler, which was so successful in the beginning.

That this change of church policy was not sincere, but was made only under compulsion, is shown by the later practice of the Party which has as its aim to liquidate the Orthodox Church before the end of the

present seven-year plan.* The reaction of Patriarch Alexis to this practice is not different in a single iota from the reaction of Metropolitan Sergius to the destruction of Church organizations in the 1930's. It is just as shameless and criminal, and it has no justification whatever.

OUR POSITION TODAY

Are we correct affirming this, and on this basis continuing to remain outside of communion with the hierarchy which is headed by Patriarch Alexis?

Absolutely we are correct. Is not the Orthodox Church given over to the torrent and pillaging of her sworn enemies? Who, in actual fact, is directing the Church with autocratic authority? Is it not the local and district officials, headed by their chief, Kuroyedov? Do they not interfere in all the petty details of church life, striving, of course, not to put the Church in order, but to do as much harm as possible to it? Has not the whole episcopate been turned into an empty decorative screen which covers with its splendid appearance the dark work of mocking the holy things of the faith? Have not certain bishops gone so far that they themselves come to close monasteries instead of defending them? (This I saw with my own eyes.) Do not the officials dare to demand of priests not to allow children into church, not to confess them or give them communion? Do not the delegations, which are sent by Patriarch Alexis to all possible church conferences, condemn anti-communism as a teaching incompatible with Christianity, at the same time that Communism itself without any embarrassment at all, declares itself anti-Christian? Thus, every lack of approval, every condemnation and ideological battle against anti-Christianity, according to the new Sergian-Alexian doctrine, is declared to be a work unworthy of a Christian; and on the contrary, union with the enemies of Christ, participation and cooperation with them, and not only a silent but often a very loud approval of their destructive and persecuting activity (for example, "Stalin is the first guardian of Orthodoxy") – this is the direct duty of every Christian.

And Patriarch Alexis acts in complete agreement with this unbelievable doctrine of his. For example, he hastens to reproach Kennedy for the renewal of nuclear tests, but he stubbornly remains silent not only when Khrushchev does the same, but even when this "peace-mak-

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*** The persecution of Khrushchev, 1959-1964.**

er," nakedly trampling not only on the rights of men, but even on his own Soviet laws, destroys the Church. Even Metropolitan Nicholas of Krutitsa, a spirited and bold apologist for the Church's "new economic plan," was unable to contain himself, and he preferred disgrace; but our Holiness, just as before, as if nothing had happened, participates in the receptions and congresses, applauds, and so forth.

"This is the way everything is," people will tell me. "But have you not violated the church canons which forbid clergy to cease communion with their Metropolitans and Bishops before a conciliar judgment?" This is an argument that seems very weighty. But let us examine it. And first of all let us ask: Do we have periodic (once every year and once every three years) councils where we might appeal? After all, according to the canons, these councils are an obligatory church institution. It turns out that our accusers are *the first violaters* of the canons, and they compel us also not to observe them. After all, one cannot accuse us of "separating before a council," if these councils in general are not even called! They will say, "For the past twenty years there were councils and conferences." But what kind? These were conferences of 'yes-men' who obediently stamped the orders, first of Karpov and then of Kuroyedov. And after all, *the canons forbid* any kind of pressure of the civil authority on the members of a council, and all the decrees of bishops which have been compelled by such pressure are declared to be invalid.

Again our accusers, passing themselves off as defenders of canons, turn out to be their violators. The constant picture is this: if one judges by the reality of things, they are lawless ones and criminals; if one judges formally, they are the keepers of canonical order in the Church. But even this pitiful consolation exists only for a very superficial investigation. But if one looks more carefully, it is discovered that they have no right whatever to insist upon their canonicity; for there exists a canon according to which every clergyman, whether priest or bishop, who has attained his rank by the influence, insistence, or in general by any kind of pressure or help of the civil authority, *must be cast out of his rank*. According to this canon, not to speak of the present bishops who cannot even put on an omophorion until Kuroyedov allows it, the Patriarch himself should be cast out of his rank – he who was "elected" by a council at the direct order of the government. Behold how "canonical" the whole hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church is!...

I will be told: "It is in Metropolitan Sergius's favor that a series of bishops returned to him who had previously departed from him." No, my dear children, this fact does not at all incline the scales to his side. I have already said what a great disturbance Metropolitan Sergius called forth in our minds and hearts, how difficult it was to discern and to decide. You cannot imagine how difficult this was, how we suffered and were tormented. It is not astonishing that there have been waverings and changes of decision. Their motives we do not know, but they could be quite various: not only the conclusions of logic, but simply great weariness, or something else like this. One bishop told me directly: "I will tell you frankly, everything that Metropolitan Sergius does is a vile disgrace. But I wish finally to return home!" (But he did not remain very long at home.)

Everything that has been said above, I hope, will convince you that it is not out of lightmindedness or prejudice that we have made our choice, and it is not out of lightness of mind and stubbornness that we do not change it. We have made it to the best of our judgment, and we are ready to stand with it at God's judgment. There are very few of us, but we do have an Orthodox episcopate – and not only the one abroad – and our conscience is at peace.

We believe that if human life is to continue on earth, then sometime there will gather a council which will justify our boldness and will justly evaluate the "wise policy" of Metropolitan Sergius and his followers who wished to "save the Church" at the price of her immaculateness and truth.

WHAT TO DO?

Now, your basic question: *What are you to do?* If the present days were like the days of the Sergianist disturbance, I would tell you what I said then: Go to churches which do not have communion with Metropolitan Sergius, but do not go to him and his partisans. But the times have changed. We have no churches in the USSR now, and can we, who have gone into our solitary cells and find there everything which the churches gave us, forbid the thousands of believers *who do not have such an opportunity* from seeking consolation and spiritual food in the churches that do exist, and can we condemn them because they go there? We cannot imitate those ignorant ones who stupidly affirm: "Those are not

churches, they are demons' temples, those who attend them defile themselves and are deprived of saving grace," and other such foolish sayings.

And so I say to you: If you do not have any other way of taking part in Divine services and receiving the Mysteries, if you are languishing with thirst for church unity and prayer, *and if attending the churches gives this to you* – then go there without disturbance, and do not fear that this will be a sin. The Spirit breathes where It will; and in His unutterable mercy the Lord, even through His most unworthy ministers, even through unbelievers, does not deprive Christians of His heavenly gifts. If you wish a more intimate personal communion, then I advise you, as I also told you before, to choose for this sincere and unhypocritical priests – and such do exist in the churches. Of course, it is difficult for them, but they somehow try to squeeze through the eye of the needle. To seek such people among the bishops is almost a hopeless cause: the overwhelming majority of them "know what they are doing," and now are especially justified the words of St. John Chrysostom, "I fear no one in the world. I fear only bishops."

And so, here, it seems, is everything that I needed to say to you, children. Yes, one thing more: Do not think that if you begin to attend the churches and even confess and receive communion in them, that I will consider you strangers. My soul is always open for you while you have the desire to be in communion with it.

With love in Christ...

1962

(Continued from page 20)

First of all, there was the extraordinary ability of Fr. Tavrion to speak to the representatives of the government. Once the Elder was suddenly called to Moscow. Everyone began to be upset and weep; they thought they would never see him again. It was forbidden for anyone to travel with him; however, one nun, who up to then had disliked him very much and had even made complaints against him to the Abbess, was more upset now than anyone else, and she set out and went secretly in the same train with the Elder.

The accusation made against Fr. Tavrion was utterly ridiculous: some pilgrims had supposedly complained that the Elder, when taking money from them for commemorations, did not give them a receipt. The intention was that the Elder would become confused, would be unable to answer anything, and then he would be arrested. However, as if literally expecting this, he pretended to be an exemplary Soviet civil servant: "To be sure, I took with me especially all the record books; please check them." And they had to let him go.

The second thing that preserved the Hermitage was money. Three dioceses (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) were supported by the immense sums which were brought from all the ends of Russia. The nuns relate that whole truckloads of flour, buckwheat, etc., were sent to the neighboring monastery at Pukhtitsa. All the taxi drivers knew the Hermitage and gladly drove to "the little elder who gives a lot."

In general, the Elder managed to get everything the monastery needed from the money-hungry authorities. For example: in the Soviet Union it is forbidden to erect churches or other buildings in monasteries. The Elder, in his own words, "waited for opportunities." He would invite officials and while giving them something to eat would say that he needed to build a bathhouse. The Latvians, who are very clean and neat themselves, would give permission for a bathhouse, and the building would begin. Unnoticeably, a second story would be added to the little bathhouse, and there pilgrims could spend the night. In the same way, a gigantic refectory and kitchen were built onto the woodshed.

The third reason for the peaceful existence of the Hermitage was the exceptionally good attitude of the diocesan bishop to the Elder.

In general, the Elder never taught people to hate the Communists themselves, but to hate the Communist spirit, the spirit of Antichrist. Thus, when people came to the Hermitage from "modernist"

parishes, he would reproach them a great deal more than he did the Communists, whose mothers and wives often travelled to the monastery. Once two abstract artists came. The Elder said nothing to them personally, but in his evening sermon (he would give sermons twice at the Liturgy – after the Gospel and at the end of the service, and twice in the evening) he said, "One must keep the church rules on how to receive communion, how to fast and so forth. But if you do not wish to keep them, then what should I, a prophet, tell you?" And looking straight at the artists, he almost shouted, "Out of the church with you!" One of them left the following day; the other one stayed a little longer, but now he kept all the monastery rules.

When in his last years the Elder was given letters from such modernists, he almost groaned: "Into the oven with them, into the oven! Have pity on me, I am sick, I have no time." But at the same time, for the letters of simple people, believers or those who wished to believe, he had both the strength and the free time to respond.

THE ELDER'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOLZHENITSYN AND FR. DIMITRY DUDKO

The Elder highly valued Solzhenitsyn. Several times he told us, "Solzhenitsyn – this is a prophet, he is our Pushkin."

Father Tavrion very much loved Father Dimitry Dudko. When Father Dimitry had just begun his broader activity and had started his Saturday night question and answer sessions, many people who knew him as a simple, fervent, and good batiushka became afraid that the tie with foreigners and the publicity which was raised around him would harm his spiritual life, and they came to the Elder. He said, "There's nothing to fear. Father Dimitry has such a simple, childlike faith that God has chosen him to be a confessor. There's nothing to fear. Only tell him that he should give his sermons on Gospel themes. The yearly cycle of the Gospel readings is so arranged that everyone who listens attentively to the Gospel readings hears precisely what he needs at that moment."

The Elder the whole time followed the life of Father Dimitry and very much sympathized with him when he was transferred from place to place. In the last year the Elder became very concerned over Father Dimitry and called him to come to him. But Father Dimitry at that time

had recently had the auto accident arranged for him by the authorities, and he was afraid to go anywhere again. When they told the Elder this he smiled: "Well, God preserves those who preserve themselves."

Father Dimitry wrote in one note that there is a righteous man still living, and you are always intending to go see him, and somehow you don't go. Now I understand that the Elder with his spiritual eyes probably saw what was awaiting Father Dimitry and wished to prepare him for his martyric struggle.

HIS YEARS IN PRISON

The Elder himself spent 20 years in prisons, concentration camps (he was building a canal), and in exile. Concerning his life in prison the Elder related the following: "How great is the sacrament of confession! Here we are lying on our bunks, and all around us is dirt, swearing and spitting; but for us it is as bright as paradise, and a prisoner whispers in my ear: 'How happy I am that I came here, Batiushka! I know that tomorrow they will take me again for interrogation, they will torture me, that I will not leave here alive; but for the first time in my life I unburdened my soul in the sacrament of confession."

Concerning his years in the concentration camps he said: "People were dying like flies. But I dug out a little cell in the ground and every day, early, early in the morning, I performed the Divine Liturgy." The nuns related that people would come to them who had sent raisins to the Elder in the camp out of which he would make wine. Later the Elder lived in exile in Kazakhstan, where he worked as a guard in a school. After the death of Stalin, the Elder could return to his native Glinsk Hermitage, where he had earlier begun his monastic life as the novice Tikhon. There he was assigned as Superior (already at the age of 30 the Elder had been raised to the rank of Archimandrite – "for your future sufferings," as the bishop said). But the monks, who had become unaccustomed to the strict rule, began to complain: "We are old, we are sick, it is difficult for us to get up early." They began to write complaints against the Elder, and he was transferred to Yaroslavl. And Glinsk Hermitage very quickly was closed, and the monks were dispersed to various monasteries.

From Yaroslavl the Elder was assigned to be the spiritual father of the Holy Transfiguration Hermitage, where he came with a great number of women who followed him, many of them secret nuns.

THE ELDER'S TEACHING

The basic theme of the teaching of the Elder was the bearing of the cross. "Everyone should do his duty," he said; "this will be the saving cross of Christ. If you are a pastor, shepherd your flock fervently, laying down your life for the sheep. If you are a monk, be an earthly angel, a heavenly man; a monk should know only two words, 'Forgive' and 'Bless.' If you have a family, take care of it. The family is the basis of life: you are a little church, a pillar of the Church's foundation." And how the Elder rose up against any violation of this law! Priests who changed their places for the sake of money he called money-changers. And concerning bishops he once said the following: "You have heard the sermon of John Chrysostom. How splendidly, how instructively it is written! What kind of bishops there once were! I do not speak of the present-day bishops; we have dreadful, frightful bishops!

Often the Elder spoke about family life: "Some people say, 'We cannot have children; our apartment is poor.' And what kind of conditions did they have earlier? In the room there was a large bed; in it the father and mother slept, and at their feet the children. And at night an angel would come and wake him up and say: 'Get up, take your wife and children and pray to God.'" The Elder would never bless divorces, and those women who got married a second time while their husbands were still alive he called "lawless Herodiases." "What did Herodias do, that John the Baptist rose up against her? She got married contrary to the law. And as she had already begun to live according to her own will, so she thought up the idea, 'Give me on a platter the head of John the Baptist, no more!' This is where self-will leads." How many families we knew where the abandoned wife or children were almost abnormal or were sick physically, and the Elder helped them both spiritually and materially to stand on their feet. How many families there were who could barely endure their grief, having sick, underdeveloped children; the Elder taught that these sick children should be considered the source of the salvation of the whole family. "There is nothing from chance in life. Everything God does for our salvation."

There were many cases of clairvoyance with the Elder. He often called people by name when he saw them for the first time. Once I ex-

pressed to the Elder my grief over the fact that my oldest son was attracted by modern art. He replied, "That's all right. He will have a teacher who will teach him both art and life." This has now been fulfilled – my son is studying iconography with Father Cyprian at Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville.

Once I went with my five daughters, and the Elder came to meet us with one nun. "Look, Matushka," he pointed to us, "a little monastery." At that time not one of us had thought about monasticism, but now all of us are in a monastery. When my children for the first time stood in the choir to sing, Father Tavrion gave his hearty approval, saying, "Sing children, and you will not be dependent on anyone in life." This was also fulfilled when, having come abroad, we were left with no one to support us.

THE ELDER'S LAST MONTHS

On the Nativity of Christ in 1977-78 we were in the Hermitage. Here for the first time we noticed that the Elder was swallowing with difficulty. He had begun to have difficulty in passing his food through; at first this seemed to respond to treatment, but later it was to lead him to his grave. For the course of seven months, from Christmas to August 13th he ate nothing at all but half an egg or a swallow of juice in a day. At this time we were just applying for emigration. The Elder hurried us up – each time he saw us (and we went there every month at that time) he would ask, "Well, are you already leaving?" As a matter of fact, half of the money needed for our trip (about five thousand rubles) we received from the Elder.

The Elder stopped serving daily in church on Pascha. Then he came out on the Ascension, on the Saturday before Pentecost when the dead are commemorated, and on Pentecost. On the Day of the Holy Spirit he lay down and did not get up again. However, even in his last days he called me and again hurried up our departure. I felt that we did not have the right to torment the Elder any more, that he could not die until he had arranged for all his spiritual children. Then I went to the head of the passport bureau to demand that we should be let go, because I, as the mother of many children, was in no position to feed the family, since I had already been dismissed from my job. And my approach helped: two weeks later we left.

One of my daughters had an interesting dream when we were in Vienna: the Elder, who looked like a dying man, his face completely yellow, led her and all of us by the hand to an icon of the Mother of God in the middle of the church with the words, "Now it is She; now go to Her" – that is, now She will guide you Herself. And in fact, the one to whom he entrusted us within a year brought us to Her monastery, to Her wonder-working icon. Evidently this dream occurred in the last days of the Elder, since a few days later, when we had gone to Rome, a telegram came: "The Elder was buried on the sixteenth."

I was not to be at the Hermitage at the death of the Elder. I think that he was trying to hurry up our departure precisely because his death would have been so unbearably difficult for us that I could have fallen into despondency and despair. But here my grief is mixed with the joyful thought (as I am convinced) that he is standing at the throne of the Almighty and is praying for our whole family.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

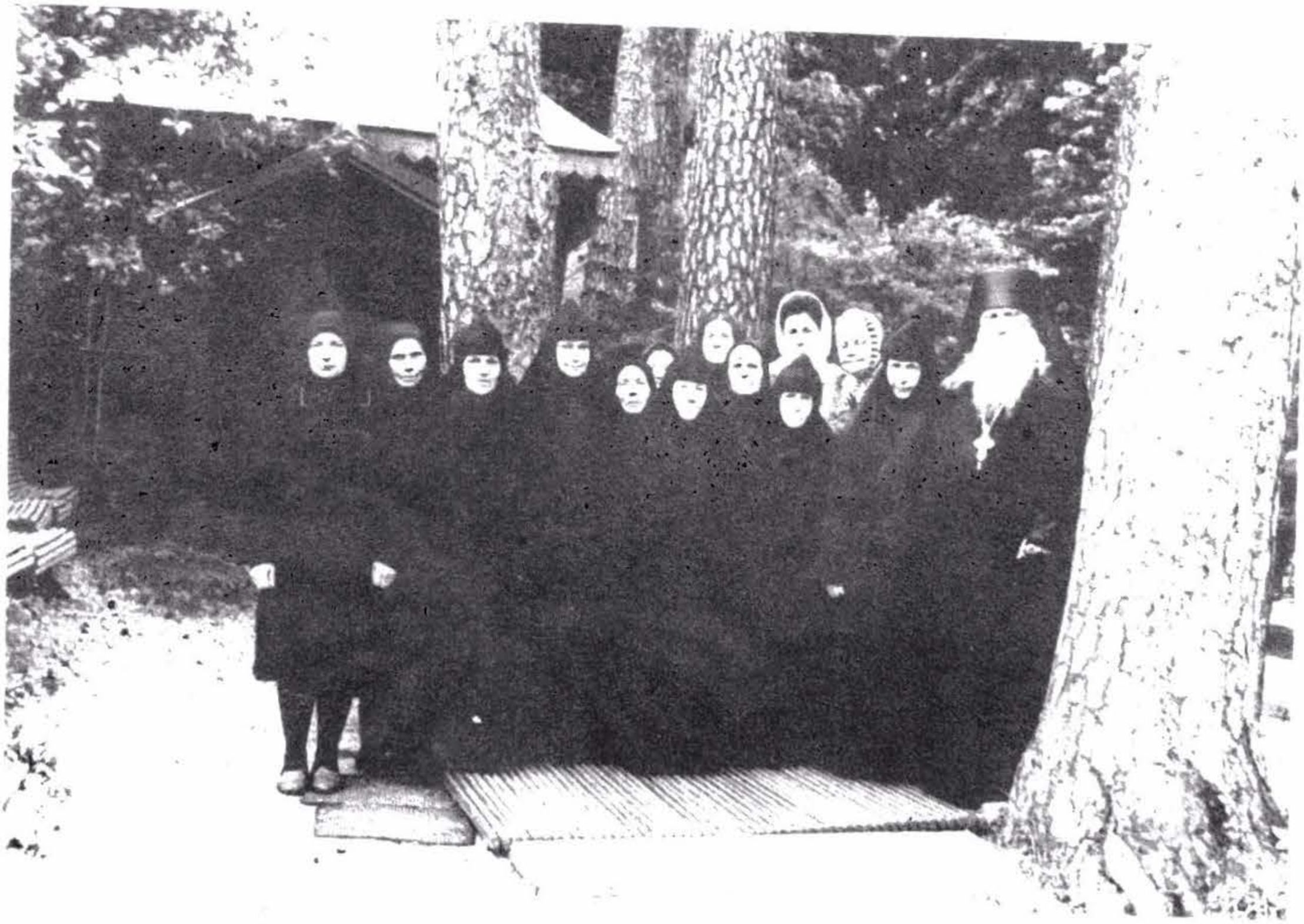
Archimandrite Tavrion (Batozsky) was born on August 10, 1898, in the town of Krasnokutsk in Kharkov province. As a boy named Tikhon he fled to Glinsk Hermitage, but was forced by his father to return home. Finally his father relented, and in 1911 he entered Glinsk Hermitage.

In 1920, still a novice in Glinsk, he was drafted by the Soviet government for military service. He went to Kursk and made clear to the authorities that as a monk he would not serve in the military, and then was allowed to return. On the way back he nearly drowned in the spring flood waters just outside the Hermitage, and he later wrote down an account of this experience out of gratitude to God for sparing his life (printed in *Nadezhda*, no. 1, pp. 111-123).

At Glinsk he had the obedience of painting icons. In 1921 he was ordained hierodeacon in the Novo-Spassk Monastery in Moscow by Bishop Paulinus (Krishechkin), with whom he stayed until the latter's death.

In 1925 he was ordained priest and from that time served the Liturgy daily. In 1926 he was appointed Superior of the St. Mark Monastery

The Riga Convent.



Archimandrite Tavrion with nuns of the Riga convent.

in Vitebsk, and in 1927 priest of the St. Theodore church. In this same year he participated in the abortive secret attempt to elect a new Patriarch, gathering votes from bishops in exile.

In 1928 he was exiled to Perm with Bishop Paulinus, and shortly thereafter was arrested and sentenced to concentration camp. From this time on he spent 27 years in prisons and camps. In 1953 he was exiled to Kazakhstan and endured the most difficult years of his life. In 1956, "rehabilitated," he was appointed priest of the cathedral church of Perm.

In 1957 he became Superior of Glinsk Hermitage and tried to introduce the ancient monastic rules; but the brothers opposed this and had him removed, and shortly after this the Hermitage was closed. In 1958 he spent several months in Pochaev Monastery, and late the same year (as the persecutions of Khrushchev began) he went to Ufa and became chief priest of the cathedral and diocesan secretary. In 1961 he served in the Yaroslavl diocese in the village of Nekrasovo, and in 1964 in the village of Nekous. There he was forbidden to preach by Metropolitan John (Wendland) when the number of people coming to hear him upset the authorities.

From March 7, 1969, he was spiritual father of the Holy Transfiguration Hermitage near Riga. In the less than ten years he spent there, the Hermitage became a place of pilgrimage from all the ends of Russia. In 1975 the KGB tried to arrest him on false accusations, but the attempt failed (see description of this above). His whole life was one of persecution and suffering.

On Sunday, August 13, 1978, Father Tavrion received Holy Communion and the Mystery of Unction, and then. after hearing the prayers for the departure of the soul, quietly reposed, at 6:30 in the morning. After several unpleasant, rainy days, the day of his burial, August 16, dawned bright and sunny, and the mourning faithful saw the sun dance. (Information from the *Vestnik* of the Russian Christian Movement, 1978, no. 127, pp. 253-255.)

FR. DIMITRI DUDKO WRITES OF FR. TAVRION

(from Fr. Dimitri's samizdat publication, *In the Light of the Transfiguration*, dated September 24, 1978)

THE DEATH OF ELDER TAVRION

On August 13, Sunday, Archimandrite Tavrion, the spiritual father of the Transfiguration Hermitage of the Saviour (in Riga), died after long and tormenting sufferings, "his own passion," from cancer of the esophagus. The Elder called difficult and tormenting pains, like cancer, the "wounds of Christ," and very often he loved to repeat that the place of the true Christian is on Golgotha, which he must endure as the crown of his life – to die on his cross. For if we "die with Christ, we shall rise with Christ." His death on Sunday was the final word of his preaching. The Elder always called on people to carefully prepare themselves, to acknowledge and meet the Day of the Lord – Sunday – like a living and active Pascha. Experiencing this day like a day in the coming Kingdom, and always receiving Communion, you best of all prepare yourself for death.

At 5:30, the Elder called Father Eugene that he might give him Holy Communion and read the prayers for the departure of the soul. After communion, during the prayers, he quietly reposed, at 6:40 in the morning. During the funeral, in the presence of a bishop and 22 priests, the daily Gospel was read – the very words from the Gospel of St. John which the reposed Archimandrite most frequently of all repeated: *He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up on the Last Day.*

His forty-day memorial also became something symbolic and joyful: it occurred on the feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God, and it was the monastery of the Nativity of the Mother of God, Glinsk Hermitage, that the 13 year old Tikhon entered out of his great love for God.

Information by A. Stolyarov

From the Editor: Many people went to him, he consoled many, and many he helped, even materially; and many now, it seems sure, have become orphaned. If only I could have heard a little word from him, too – but I, a sinner, just could not manage to go to see him; I only received a little note.

The Kingdom of Heaven to you, O carer for the Russian land!

Sometimes we talk about a righteous man, and even manage to see him, but you look and he's already departed. Pray there for us who remain upon this sinful earth!

One woman told me the following dream about him: He was walking in the company of bishops. Going up to her, he blessed her with two hands like a bishop. Evidently, the work he was doing was a bishop's work.

Now gather the crumbs of whatever remains from him.

A SERMON OF ELDER TAVRION

(Also sent for publication by Metropolitan Philaret)

In this, one of the typical sermons of Elder Tavrion, transcribed from a tape made as he spoke, one may see his constant emphasis on conscious spiritual life in the Church of Christ, as well as his anger against every form of hypocrisy, especially among priests. One should keep in mind that one of the lamentable results of the Moscow Patriarchate's "adaptation" to Soviet reality is the production of priests who are "career men" and care more for the preservation of their position and privilege than for the needs of the people. Priests like Father Tavrion, Father Dimitry Dudko, and Father Gleb Yakunin are rare exceptions to this rule, and they have suffered much because of this.

And so, finishing the Gospel, we hear: The Lord calls us to preserve ourselves from the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. This refers very much to each one of us. And so, brothers and sisters, what do we strive for in our faith and expression so that we might be filled with sincerity? The Apostle Paul, in his epistle which we have just heard, says. *Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church* (Col. 1:24). The Lord reproaches us because

those who have taken the key of knowledge do not enter the Kingdom of God themselves, and those who wish to enter they hinder (Luke 11:52). This is spoken of pastorship.

If pastors perform their calling heedlessly, you see what a terrible sin lies on them. True pastorship, and our attitude to pastorship, should be precisely what the Apostle Paul speaks about. He writes further: *Of which I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God* (Col. 1:25). That is, every priest accepts this ministry not just as it happens – for example, that he is sent to one place or another – but precisely according to God's dispensation.

This dispensation *is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles* – that is, unbelievers – *which is Christ in you, the hope of glory, Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus* (Col. 1:26-28).

You see what riches are entrusted, what an assignment the Lord gives to pastors. It is clear: *Whom we preach, warning every man.* The whole purpose of the Church of God and its temples is so that in these temples the word of God might resound, and that through these temples every man might be warned and taught all wisdom. There is nothing in the world, whether in moral or public life, about which the Wisdom of God through His word, through His Church, should not give warning and exhortation. Why? In order to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

Whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily (Col. 1:29). Does not the Lord work mightily in every priest who is called? You tell me. Look at some great, famous man or governor – does he have what a priest has? No! A priest has the right to forgive you your sins; he has the right to bind you. No matter how famous a man might be, he does not have the right to offer "on behalf of all and for all" – but a priest makes this offering. No matter what he does, he is fulfilling his assignment for this – to save you. Judge for yourselves what a great purpose this is and what great means the Lord has furnished His Church with, in the person of His pastors.

To what does this oblige us? If one understands these truths – and we understand them – we must live by them. The Lord clearly said: *He that receives you, receives Me, and he that rejects you, rejects Me; he that hears you, hears Me* (Matt. 10:40, Luke 10:16).

And so, brothers and sisters, you see what a relationship there should be between pastors and their flocks. This is the essence of the true, grace-giving, spiritual life of the Church. If this is not present, there is nothing but hypocrisy, which the Lord mightily condemned.

It's the same with us now. Look what an abundance of grace the Lord gives! And so you see what a priest is. He is placed in order to exhort every man to act in a way worthy of God. Isn't this what men need?

With what authority, with what means the priest is clothed! And how attentive and fervent he must be in his position! And look at the outward situation also: the priest has a church building at his disposal – what does that mean that he should do? He must show people the beauty of God's love, he must develop the riches that the Church of God has, and then he must be close to the people.

Don't you understand how many difficulties people have, especially in matters of a moral character? How many disorders there are in families, how lacking in families are the qualities of warm love, mercy, and compassion for each other!

And who should pay attention to this? If anyone else can do something or take part, this is still a private matter; but the priest is assigned to this by God. The Lord entrusts it to him and says: "This is My inheritance, which I have acquired by My Blood; and so look to it, you also must labor on this My inheritance. And in order to make you firm and strong, I will clothe you with the grace of My Divine lips." He breathed on His disciples and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whomever you forgive through this Holy Spirit, it will be forgiven him; and whatever (sin) you retain, it will be retained" (John 20:22-23).

At the Last Supper He turned to His disciples, gave them the Divine Cup, and said: "Do this in remembrance of Me." And when a priest is ordained, what is done after the bishop lays his hands on him and by prayer brings down the grace of ordination? – The Divine Lamb is given into his hands with the words of the bishop: "Take this pledge and keep it whole and unharmed; for it you will be held to account in the Second and Fearful Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Behold what a priest is! What authority is given the one who receives the Holy Spirit from the lips of Christ in order to forgive and to bind men. Such an assignment has the Lord given him, such riches has He placed in his hands: take them.

Thus, the (newly-ordained) priest actually takes one-fourth of the Lamb, which the bishop gives to him, straight into his hands. And he stands and prays, while in his hands is the Divine Lamb. This is what he must occupy himself with, this is the means by which he must save others and himself – this Divine Lamb.

Now just imagine what an inward, deep, rich fullness of God's grace there is in the priest's ministry! And what is it for? It is for you – God's inheritance. And it is not simply that, for example, I command you to live in one place or another and be priests – no. Rather: those whom I have acquired by My Blood, I entrust to you. This is the spirit of the Apostolic ministry. Read the book of the Acts of the Apostles – is this not there? When the Apostle Paul was going for the last time to Rome, he stopped off on the way in Ephesus and commanded the presbyters to be called. And when the presbyters came, he began reminding them: "Remember the years I spent among you. For three and a half years I preached among you, taught you from house to house and privately how to walk on the way of the Lord." And therefore, turning to the presbyters he said: "Tend the flock of God which you have. Oversee it not by force, but in a God-pleasing manner, with love and meekness, because you will give an answer for it" (Acts 20:17-35).

This is the spirit of the Apostolic ministry, and this spirit of Apostolic ministry should be with us too! You all know perfectly what kind of situation, what kind of surroundings you are in. Why is it so? What is the cause and reason for this? Of course, it is the priests with their parishes. After all, the priest must reveal the whole beauty of the grace of God given to him for the salvation of men. This is a fact. The Lord gave him grace, gave him His Divine word, which opens up just everything.

And so, if a priest will use this Divine word to shepherd and exhort those whom the Lord has entrusted to him, he will do the same work that Chrysostom did. Why was he so strong? Why did he labor so much? Why did he leave such a heritage? Because he labored on the word of God, he taught men the word of God. Therefore he left an eternal memory after himself, as well as works which for us are the most instructive, splendid, universal.

And so, brothers and sisters, this is an example for us of precisely how each one of us should fulfill his calling. You see what riches the Lord gives! One has to be struck at how brief and clear it all is, how

powerful and profitable. Do not people today demand this grace? Do they not need it? They do. But we, having such a high calling, do nothing. But we must do something, or else to us will be applied everything that the Lord said with reproach to those who seem to be good in outward form, but are empty of inward content.

Therefore, let us not be like that! These words of the Gospel refer precisely to each one of us. Yes. Let us flee the leaven of the Pharisees and Saducees, which is hypocrisy. Let us be sincerely what we are. And will we not be sincere if each of us acknowledges that he is a Christian? We must pray, we must read the word of God, we must be sanctified by the Mysteries. Yes. We must understand where we are going and what awaits us. We must be fervent and constant – and this is just what the word of God gives us.

And so, let us try, brothers and sisters, not just to be hearers, but to be also doers of the word of God. Amen.

A SERMON BEFORE MID-PENTECOST

(Translated from *Nadezhda*, no. 4, pp. 258-260)

What are you hoping for? What awaits you? Think what awaits your relatives, for whom you supposedly grieve because they live without faith. Think about yourselves – what awaits you?!

Yes, truly, what awaits you while people live without faith in God; what a pitiful life they have! Look at their lives: they receive just about everything in life – education, and youth, and a good position, and so forth – but what an empty life they have! It is frightful even to look at them – and they themselves are living in this frightfulness... But we are responsible for them.

Do you see what a struggle lies upon us? – Not only to preserve our own faith, but to show it for them, to show our faith. *The time has come now not to teach, but to show.* That means we are able to show. And so, let each one think now about himself.

You consider yourself a Christian, being in one calling, one situation, or another; but what do you do to strengthen faith?

We have been placed in Apostolic times. The Apostles had no prospects at all, except for the sufferings of Christ. And truly, they ended their lives in difficult trials – some were beheaded, others were crucified or given to wild beasts. And the first Christians lived like that; they were afraid for every day: either they would be given to wild beasts, or their children would be taken away and given to the beasts. That's how the Christians lived; they lived like that for over 300 years.

But what was it that strengthened them and left them faithful in their faith? They felt faith in God; they felt righteousness; they felt precisely the *need of faith*.

It is just like that today. If a man has a need for faith, he will believe and will find faith. But the world has such an attitude that a believing man is considered abnormal. You see how it is! And so, if he cannot be talked out of it, he is put in a crazy house. That's a fact. How should one act?

And now judge for yourself how much one should treasure those grace-given opportunities which the Lord gives us. And as for the Liturgy, the Cup is the Kingdom of God, heaven on earth. It is the foundation on which a man can become calm, be strengthened in faith, become illuminated in eternity. In this is God's righteousness, both for ourselves and for others.

Therefore, you should come to understand this opportunity which we should treasure, and all the more when we come to the monastery. We must treasure this. And then we should look clearly at what awaits us. Later we will regret, but it will already be too late.

Christian brothers and sisters! Today everyone can read and write. Read the word of God! Through the word of God the Spirit of God will come to all of you, and you will be saved. That is why the Church of God confesses: "By the Holy Spirit every soul is alive."

Now Mid-pentecost is coming. There is a wonderful Gospel for it, where the Lord speaks of the living water. He says: *He that believeth on Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water* (John 7:38). He said this of believers who have the Holy Spirit. We must keep this water. If this water will be in us, we ourselves will be saved and we will save the whole world around us. May the Lord help us in this!

Miraculous Help

BY THE PRAYERS OF ARCHBISHOP JOHN MAXIMOVITCH

Up to now I have not written about the diseases of myself and my relatives of which holy Vladika John healed us. I will do this now. I can affirm under oath the exactness and truth of my words.

In 1953 I began to be tormented by rheumatism. On October 9 (of that year) in Holy Trinity Monastery (Jordanville, N.Y.) there was the opening of the Sobor of Bishops, which Vladika John attended.

My sister Sophia went up to Vladika and asked him to pray for the sick Olga (myself) and Lydia. Lydia is our niece who lives in Australia. She had become ill and had been placed in a hospital. On the very first night (after this) my pains began to decrease, and in about three days I was completely well and did not have to begin taking the pills which had been prescribed for me by the doctor and which I had bought for nine dollars. Judging by the letters from Australia, Lydia also at this very same time became completely well, to the astonishment of the doctors.

In the winter of the following year, 1954, I again became ill of rheumatism of the joints and muscles, and on February 5 I entered the hospital. On this same day I sent a letter to Vladika and asked him to pray for me. To the letter, on a separate sheet, I added my confession, since I had read that St. John of Kronstadt, before praying for the healing of the sick, prayed for the remission of their sins. I enumerated all the sins I could remember. I repented also of my sin of smoking. I was especially tormented by the fact that I smoked when I was sewing vestments; I was sewing vestments for the first time in my life and therefore was

very upset. I had never dared to ask Vladika to heal me of this vice; I had smoked for 27 years and could not give it up for anything.

Lying in the hospital and receiving no letter from Vladika, I thought that Vladika had not forgiven me my sins; and the pain did not cease. At this time I received a letter from Germany from a certain disabled veteran who wrote that Vladika had been in Italy, had stopped on his way through Germany, and then was returning to France. This calmed me and gave me hope that Vladika had not yet received my letter.

On March 7, Forgiveness Sunday, I was brought home from the hospital. I was still completely sick and weak. However, on Tuesday, March 9 (new style), I suddenly became much better, in fact so well that I even got up from bed and improved every day and could even do some housework. On Friday I received a letter from Vladika and felt myself completely well. At the same time I had obtained an aversion for smoking. Here is a copy of the letter of Vladika John:

Finding of the Precious Head
of St. John the Forerunner
Feb. 24 (March 9), 1954

Suffering Olga:

May the Lord help you and heal you.

The Lord permits our sufferings in order that we might feel our weakness and strive more fervently towards the Source of every good thing, our Creator Who gives everyone what is profitable.

May the Lord strengthen you.

I have prayed for you and will pray at the Liturgy.

May the Lord also forgive you all your transgressions.

Go to confession and receive communion of the Holy Mysteries.

May the blessing of the Lord be with you and with your sister Sophia.

May God also help the sick Gaida.

Your
Archbishop John

At the same time on February 5, when asking Vladika to pray for me, I had written also about my niece Gaida, a Latvian, asking him to pray for her also. She had tuberculosis. She was in a sanatorium and the doctors had said that she should not have children. By the prayers of Vladika she became well and has a son 18 years old and a daughter 14. They are all well.

Olga Makarova

Note: The above-mentioned Sophia is a physician by profession and is a witness of these miraculous healings.

(Cont. from inside front cover)

live after death. I expect the Divine level that the Church teaches me and that Christ talked about.

Besides, nowhere in those two books did I find reports about what type of experiences criminals have. I do not expect them to have such sugar-coated experiences as the non-criminals seem to have.

Z., California

Your splendid new book, *The Soul after Death*, is truly a great contribution to Orthodox education in the United States. Although I am a member of a jurisdiction which, sadly, is not in full communion with your Russian Synod, I still have great love and admiration for your Church and its Metropolitan, Philaret. I distribute literature from the Synod amongst my fellow parishioners, and this year I am using your book, *The Soul after Death*, as a text for my Adult Orthodox Christian Education class which I conduct every Sunday. Each week I have been writing a lecture (based almost verbatim on your book) and the parishioners have been nearly spellbound with interest.

T., California

"LIVING ORTHODOXY"

A new English-language Orthodox magazine is being published bi-monthly by Fr. Gregory Williams of Agape Community, Liberty, Tennessee, a missionary community of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. Each issue contains Lives of Saints, devotional readings, letters, and discussion of questions of current concern to Orthodox Christians. Subscriptions are: $5 for 1 year, $9 for two years, $12.50 for 3 years. Send order to:

Living Orthodoxy
Rt. 1, Box 171
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St. Herman Summer Pilgrimage
August 8–10

With the blessing of Archbishop Anthony of Western America and San Francisco, this year's Pilgrimage will begin with the Vigil on Saturday evening, August 8 (new style), and Divine Liturgy on Sunday, August 9 (the Feast of St. Herman's Glorification), and continue with two days of lectures (Aug. 9-10) and five days of theological courses (Aug. 11-15).

LECTURES

St. Herman's Valaam Years, 1781-1981
The Search for Orthodoxy Today
How to Hold a Missionary Conversation
Russia's New Martyrs
Suffering Orthodox Russia and Rumania – an American View
1000 Years of Valaam *(a slide lecture)*

THEOLOGICAL COURSES

1. A General Survey of Orthodox Theology
2. The Orthodox Patristic Interpretation of Genesis
3. Orthodox Church Services and Singing

There is no charge for the Pilgrimage or the courses. Pilgrims will be expected to bring their own sleeping bags, attend the daily church services, and help out as needed.

Transportation: By car, take Interstate 5 to Red Bluff, then west on Route 36 to Platina (45 miles); left on Beegum Gorge Road 1¾ miles. Pilgrims arriving by bus are asked to inform the monastery in advance so that arrangements can be made to have them picked up in Redding (or call 916-241-1732).